

REMARKS

The last Official Action in the above-identified application has been carefully considered. The Examiner's indication that claims 7-9 and 16-18 are allowed is greatly appreciated. This amendment has been presented to place this application in condition for allowance. Accordingly, reexamination and reconsideration of this application are respectfully requested.

Claims 2, 5, 7-9, 11, 14, and 16-18 remain pending in this application. By this amendment, claims 2, 5, 11, and 14 have been amended, without prejudice, without admission, without surrender of subject matter, and without any intention of creating any estoppel as to equivalents. No new matter is added. Support for this amendment is found in Applicant's disclosure and specifically at page 9.

In the Official Action, claims 2, 5, 11, and 14 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by Igarashi (U.S. Patent No. 4,952,040). The Examiner indicates that Igarashi discloses a light guide for an endoscope comprising a bundle of optical fibers which emit illumination light guided by the optical fibers from a light emission end face, wherein an amount of light emitted from a central region in the end face, is relatively small in comparison with the amount of light emitted from the peripheral region in the end face. As to Claims 2 and 11, the Examiner further states that Igarashi discloses a light shielding member near the end face for partially shielding light emitted from the central region in the end face. As to Claims 5 and 14, the Examiner further states that Igarashi discloses an illumination system composed of a plano-convex lens provided near the end face.

Applicant respectfully submits that with respect to Claims 2 and 11, Igarashi discloses "reducing the quantity of light emitted from the center of the light guide with an

opaque rod-like member 5 embedded into the center of the light guide fiber bundle 1 as shown in Fig. 39.” (Col. 12, lines 29-32)(emphasis added). As is further apparent from Figure 39 of Igarashi, opaque rod-like member 5 forms the center of light guide fiber bundle 1. Therefore, Igarashi teaches the reduction in the quantity of light emitted from the light guide by placing a non-emitting, opaque member in the fiber bundle.

Claim 2 has been amended herein to recite that a mask for partially or completely shielding light emitted from the central region in the light emission end face is provided near the end face of the light guide. Therefore, in comparison with the light guide disclosed by Igarashi, Applicant’s requirement for a mask provided near the end face does not include an opaque member integral to the fiber bundle but instead masks the light emitted from the fiber bundle.

Similarly, Claim 11 has been amended herein to recite that a mask for partially or completely shielding light emitted from the central region in the light emission end face is provided near the end face of the light guide. Therefore, in comparison with the light guide disclosed by Igarashi, Applicant’s requirement for a mask provided at the end face does not include an opaque member integral to the fiber bundle but instead masks the light emitted from the fiber bundle.

Accordingly, it is believed that the Examiner’s rejection of claims 2, 5, 11, and 14 based upon Title 35 U.S.C. §102(b) has been overcome by the present amendment and remarks and withdrawal thereof is respectfully requested.

In view of the foregoing amendment and remarks, it is respectfully submitted that the application as now presented is in condition for allowance. Early and favorable reconsideration of the application are respectfully requested.

A Notice of Allowance is earnestly solicited.

Respectfully submitted,
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